



DHS Today via E-Mail

May 21, 2004

Agency Selects New Early Education Director



The Department of Human Services has selected Tonya Russell to head DHS' Division of Child Care and Early Education. Russell will take over the position vacated by Janie Huddleston in April. Most recently Russell served as the Director of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Head Start program. Russell has spent much of her career in early education and believes that her experience with head start programs will give her a unique advantage in her new role. "This is an incredible opportunity to utilize my past state and local experiences to foster good partnerships across early childhood programs," said Russell. The department is collaborating with public and private partners to enhance state programs and provide resources to areas of the state in the most distress. "Tonya views educating children as more than teaching basic skills in a classroom," said Paul Kelly, Interim Director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. "She sees the needs of the family as a critical support for a child's ability to learn. She also has an excellent record of building partnerships between parents, providers, business and advocacy organizations to improve early learning experiences."

DHS AROUND THE STATE

BACA: Bikers Against Child Abuse

On April 10th, a group of unique individuals gathered to support a special group of children. BACA (Bikers Against Child Abuse) exists primarily to create a safer environment for abused children. Their desire is to send a clear message to all involved with the abused child; that they are prepared to lend their support by their affiliation and their presence. Even though it rained the weekend of the event in Fort Smith, this did not put a damper on any of the activities planned. The route began at Fort Smith Park and ended at Creekmore. Snacks and beverages for the riders were donated by DCFS personnel (Sebastian County).



Hats Off to...

The VAC Committee and DHS Staff raised \$242 for MDA through the “Shamrock Against Muscular Dystrophy” campaign. A special thank you to Francine Crain (DSB) who raised over \$100 for this campaign.

The DHS Heart Walk Team contributed \$3,615.80 for the Central Arkansas American Heart Walk, held on 4/24/04.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

May 27th – 18th Annual Arkansas Women’s Conference, C.A. Vines Arkansas 4H Center, Ferndale

May 31st – Memorial Day

June 2nd– DHS Toastmasters Club, meets every Wednesday from 1:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m.; for more information call 501-682-8935

June 5th - Open 4D Jackpot Barrel Race, Saline County Fairgrounds, Benton - sponsored by the Arkadelphia Human Development Center Volunteer Council; for information call Shenna Shuler (870)246-8011

June 16th - DHS VAC Council Blood Drive, New Donaghey Plaza South Building, Conference Rooms A & B

A Final Thought....

Thank you for including the letter in the latest issue of DHS Today from the soldier in Iraq to his Dad. I was very much moved by reading it. I work for Pulaski South DCO and am stationed at the Arkansas Children's Hospital. My son, Thad, just recently returned from spending almost a year in Iraq with the 189th Infantry. While there, he wrote a poem concerning his experience and the reason he was there. I thought you might like to read it, and if you think it's appropriate, you may share it with others by putting it in DHS Today.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Brister

Why

By Thad Brister

He's quiet as he packs his gear, he won't be back for at least a year.
He may never be home again if things go wrong and the enemy wins.
He stops and turns as he opens the door; the tears in her eyes say so much more than the words that either one could say about his trip in a land so far away.

Others watch this sad little show, and many say they wouldn't go.
Some even ask the question, "Why?"...he looks away and makes no reply.
Night falls in that distant land as he lay alone upon the sands.
There's sounds of shells as he drifts toward dreams and he's lulled to sleep by M-16's.

Bad news comes with the morning sun; in the night they have lost another one.
He takes his breakfast, an MRE, as he heads out to clear the debris.
Others work at this morbid chore, gathering parts of helicopters and more.
A newsman stops them, asks them "Why?"but they keep to their task and make no reply.

He checks his weapon for the hundredth time, only halfway through the night's long ride.
The bitter chill of the desert night helps keep him alert and ready to fight.
Tracers cut the sky ahead; an earlier convoy is taking some lead.
They pick up speed to join the fight but the enemy fades into the night.

Back at base they watch a show, the guest some actress and her latest beau.

They look to the cameras, asking, "Why?" He just shakes his head and makes no reply.
He sits on the steps of the TMC, his chin in hand, elbow on knee.
The only light is his cigarette's glow; the blood on his hands and knees doesn't show.

He rode with the wounded an hour before trying to keep them from death's door.
One of the drivers asked him, "Why?"...he dressed a wound and made no reply.
He steps off the bus back on his home ground and looks around at the gathered crowd.

They spot each other through the throng; they're finally together after so long.
He pulls her tight into his arms and she cries with joy that he's safe from harm.
He lifts his son into the same embrace, his family's love shows on his face.
Through months of trial in the distant sand, his thoughts of his home were close at hand.
Her face was a light on dark lonely nights, his son a beacon throughout the fight.
His family lives without the fear of a madman's guns or torturers' gear.
He holds her tighter to his chest as his own eyes start getting wet.
In his arms is his reason why, some questions need no reply.



Do you have something you'd like to share in the newsletter?
Send e-mail to Julie.Munsell@mail.state.ar.us or
Ingrid.Green@mail.state.ar.us. Send a fax to (501) 682-6836
or call (501) 682-8650.